

District and Pueblo of Santa Ana hold groundbreaking for two environmental restoration projects

by Joan Mier

The District and the Pueblo of Santa Ana hosted a formal groundbreaking ceremony Nov. 14 at the Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort Events Center for two projects designed to assist in the recovery of endangered species.

The \$6.5 million riparian and wetland restoration project consists of building two grade restoration facilities and a bed sill to be placed in the Rio Grande channel. The purpose of these structures is to halt channel degradation and promote habitat more conducive to the endangered silvery minnow, according to Ron Kneebone, project manager.

"It is one of the largest projects so far in the middle Rio Grande that is geared toward enhancing the habitat for minnow," he said. The Section 1135 project is being cost-shared with the federal government paying 75 percent and the Pueblo paying 25 percent.

The reason the project has become necessary is that the 5-mile reach of the Rio Grande channel within the Pueblo of Santa Ana has incised from five to 10 feet, resulting in a narrower and deeper river channel which is less suitable for native fish species, Kneebone said.

The other project is the construction of a 700-foot long weir in the upper reaches of the former Jemez Reservoir that will span the channel of the Jemez River. The \$2 million project is being built to mitigate for the draining of the reservoir. The weir

will prevent channel incision and promote maintaining the current water table in the area, which will preserve the unique environmental habitat, especially that which is

needed for the recovery of the southwestern willow flycatcher. That project is 100 percent federally funded, Kneebone said.

"It is one of the largest projects so far in the middle Rio Grande that is geared toward enhancing the habitat for the minnow."

"The channel incision that would result without building the weir would cause the loss of more than 400 acres of significant habitat," Kneebone said. "It would also put adjacent historic and cultural properties at risk."

Both projects are slated for completion by the summer of 2004.□

A Christmas Carol



Photo by Derrick Johnson

These District members put their musical talents to work to entertain others on Dec. 16. The carollers performed tunes such as Feliz Navidad, O Holy Night, Jingle Bell Rock, Away in a Manger, What Child is this? and Silver Bells. Pictured from left are Theresa Armijo, Alta Jarvis, Susan Shampine, Dale Gronewold, Ondrea Hummel, Lesley McWhirter, Connie Dean, Tony Urquidez and Mark Yuska.